

THE LONELY BRIDE.

A PLEASANT STORY.

THE day accomodation train on the Shore Line was making its deliberate way westward, curving with every curve of the Connecticut shore, and clinging to the water side as though actuated by a sentiment for coast scenery. On one side of the track lay the blue, white-capped sea; and the other, low rolling hills with the foregrounds of brown meadow and golden sedge, over all the superb arch of sun-lit sky. It was a delicious, late autumn day, and Miss Mallows found "That Husband of Mine" so little engrossing—perhaps because of her maidenly unacquaintance with the possessive ease of that article—that she flung it down and betook herself to gazing from the window. She was growing dreamy, as gazers at a rapidly changing scene are apt to do, when a word reached her ear, and aroused curiosity enough to make her turn her head. It was a woman's name, and an uncommon one—"Arethusa."

The persons who uttered it was a man. His seat was on the opposite side of the car, and a little in advance of that which Miss Mallows herself occupied, and she now observed that there was something odd about his appearance. His head and shoulders were massive and finely formed, his face seen in profile was a good one, with kindly eyes and a striking forehead, broad and benevolent. But there was something dwarfish in his appearance, and when presently he half rose to shut the window it became apparent that he was a dwarf. There was no deformity, but the large head and broad shoulders were balanced by a miserable pair of little legs not longer than those of a child of ten years. He was not young, for there were grizzled hairs about his temple and in his full beard, and altogether his appearance was half attractive, and awoke a feeling compounded of good will and pity so strongly mingled that it was hard to tell which predominated.

His companion—evidently the "Arethusa" addressed—was a girl not over 20, of that delicate type of prettiness known as "American" which fades so early, but is charming in its brief flower time. Her new grey suit, with crepe lisse ruffles at throat and wrist, the crisp feather in her hat, even the shining red leather of her traveling bag, and the perfectly fresh, carefully put on gloves, bespoke the bride, but there was something very unbridled in the face which these fineries surrounded. The eyes, blue in tint and beautifully shaped and set, were swollen with crying, and quivered nervously, every vestige of color had fled from the round childish cheeks, and the hands in new gloves were pinched together with a tightness like terror. Once or twice, as Miss Mallows watched, she fought with emotion, and called up a wan little smile in answer to something said to her, but she never spoke. Her companion, on the contrary, talked incessantly in a low-voiced steady strain.

Miss Mallows could only catch a word now and then, and her curiosity about the couple grew so strong that she felt that she would pay any price to know their story.

There could be no doubt as to their relations, she thought; they were husband and wife, and just married. The little man evidently had no thought except for his bride. Mile after mile he talked and talked, devouring her with his eyes the while, and she sat with half-averted head, never meeting his gaze or replying by a word to anything he said. Once she turned and looked at Miss Mallows with a wild appeal in her face which was startling, but she instantly looked away, and presently laid her arm on the window sill and her head on her arm, and began to cry in a still, dreadful manner, not sobbing aloud, but trembling all over with a pent-up feeling which was worse than an out-break. The man tried in vain to soothe her; she repelled him gently but decidedly, and at last he finally gave up the attempt, and silently sat beside her with a grave, troubled face.

"I shall die if I can't find out about those people," thought the excited observer on the other side of the car. But she did not die, neither could she find out. One cannot walk up to perfect strangers and demand, "Your story or your life!"—it is impossible. So Miss Mallows sat still, her conjectures aflame and her fingers fairly twitching with impatience, till at last the train stopped at a small way-station, and the little man, rising from his seat—and, alas! looking even shorter than when he sat, said, in a gentle, deprecatory tone, "Now, Arethusa."

With that they vanished. Miss Mallows had one more glimpse of them, getting into a brand new carryall, which looked as though it might be a part of the wedding outfit, and then the train bore her away. Her thoughts remained behind with the people in whom she

had taken so sudden and violent an interest.

"I wonder who they are, and why on earth she married him?" ran her reflections. "So young and pretty, and so evidently unhappy! And for all her prettiness, it was not an educated face, or a lady's—he looked far nicer than she. I feel exactly as though I had dipped into the middle chapter of an exciting novel, and then somebody had taken away the book. What would I give to read the beginning and the end of it! "That husband of Mine," indeed! Stupid wretch!" And she gave the volume a vicious little knock. "How is one to endure such twaddle, when really interesting things like this are happening in real life all the time? Let me see—where was it that those people got out?" consulting her ticket. "Up-ham Corners—that is only ten, eleven, thirteen miles from Patuxet. Perhaps Margaret Lenox may know something of them. I'll ask her."

Felicia—I am tired of calling her Miss Mallows, which name, besides, seems to belle her frank, impulsive nature—had her desire gratified sooner than she had dared to hope.

Mr. Lenox was late to tea that night, and explained the fact by saying, "I went four miles out of my road to see David Dalrymple's new steam-thresher, and, behold, when I got there, it was locked up, and he away with the key in his pocket. And what do you think, Margaret?—he had gone to be married?"

"Not really?"

"Really. I tried to pump old Sally as to the age and antecedents of the bride, but she was deaf at once, and not a word could I extract. Master David had told her to have a good fire and boil the ham—that was all; and she wasn't one to ask questions about things as didn't concern her. Then she pinched her lips tight and began to poke the fire, and as it struck me that the remark things which did not 'concern' people was meant to be personal, I gave it up and came away."

Oh dear! What dreadful woman do you suppose has pounced on that poor little David? An old maid, of course, or some harpy of a widow."

"I can't say as to that, but I imagine she's good looking, and that David is in love with her."

"Dear, what makes you think that?"

"Oh, because of the pains he has taken about the house. Lots of new furniture, and everything reddeed up. He's bought a carryall, Sally says."

"Who is this person that you are talking about?" asked Felicia.

"A neighbor of ours—seven miles off, to be sure, but that counts as neighborhood in the country. Such a nice, clever man, Felicia; a good farmer, too, and thoroughly respectable in every way; but poor fellow! so unfortunate in his appearance—a dwarf almost, with the head and shoulders of a grown person, and stunted legs no bigger than a child's."

"Oh!" almost shrieked Miss Mallows, "that must be my little man in the car. I came all the way from New Haven with him and his bride;" and she went into a description which left Mrs. Lenox as much excited as her friend.

"I must see her!" she cried. "We'll drive over in a day or two."

Weather was unpropitious, however, and the day or two proved nearly a fortnight. Mrs. Lenox had a double errand, being provided with a basketful of Zonale geraniums to be exchanged for cuttings from old Sally's famous chrysanthemums; but when, after knocking a long time at the seldom used front door of the farmhouse, they made their way round to the kitchen, and from thence to the family sitting-room, no one was visible, and the fireless hearth and neatly piled books and papers on the table made it evident that the apartment had not been used of late. While they lingered and wondered, a creaking step came down the stairs, and old Sally, with a teacup in her hand, entered the room. She saluted the ladies grimly.

"Thank ye, Miss Lenox. I'd like the geraniums well enough if I'd time to tew round with 'em, but jest now my hands is full, without taking care of plants, a-nussing Miss Dalrymple."

"Mrs. Dalrymple's?" is she ill?"

"Yes, she is and she ain't. 'Tain't no particular kind of sickness as I can see; but she's weak as water, and looks bad. I gave her pennyroyal when she fust come, thinkin' it might be she'd ketched an inside cold on the journey; but it didn't do no good, and she kep' on not eatin' nothin' and gettin' more and more peakin', till finally she took to bed, and to-day Mr. David's gone over for the doctor. He set up with her last night. She didn't want him to, but he said he shouldn't sleep any how, and he'd rather. It don't seem as if it need take up any time awantin' on her, for she don't ask for anything from mornin' till day's end; but sickness takes steps any way you fix it, and I hain't done much except go up stairs and down again these four days."

"Dear me!" began Mrs. Lenox. But Felicia moved by an impulse, broke in:

"I think I must have come on in the same train with Mrs. Dalrymple. I wonder if I might go up and see her?"

Rather to her surprise, Sally made no objection.

"She hain't said she wouldn't see nobody, and mebbe it'll rouse her up a bit," was her ultimatum, and Miss Mallows ran lightly up. A door stood half open; she tapped, and in answer to a faint "Come in," entered the bed-room, where, covered with a resplendent star-patterned patchwork quilt, lay her late fellow-traveler.

The pale cheeks, from which much of the childish roundness had wasted, flushed at sight of her.

"I hope you will forgive me for coming up so unceremoniously," began Felicia, to hide her own nervousness. "Your old housekeeper gave me leave, and—well, I felt so sorry for you, sick and alone in a strange place, that I wanted to come. If it tires you, you must send me away."

The girl looked at her a moment in silence. Then she said, "Won't you sit down? There's a chair."

Miss Mallows sat down. She was a pleasant object to look at in her olive greens and pleasant browns, with cheeks and eyes brightened by frosty air, and the invalid felt it.

"You was in the car the day I came, wasn't you?" she said. "I recollect your hat. 'I've been sick 'most ever since. It seems a long time."

"The first few weeks in a new place are apt to seem long," replied Felicia, kindly; "and I dare say you miss your home."

"I haven't any home to miss"—sadly.

"Indeed."

"No. I don't remember my folks at all, or scarcely. My father he died when I was born, and mother when I wasn't but two. I hadn't any body else, so they sent me to the orphan asylum, and I lived there fifteen years."

"Poor child! Did you? And what then?"

"Then I was took by Mr. Parker over to Cheshire. I was their help, but they were very good to me, and it was most of a home I'd ever had. Miss Parker she liked to have me call her "ma," and I did."

"And then you married Mr. Dalrymple."

"Yes." The blue eyes clouded over, and the lips closed tightly over the one word.

"And now I hope you'll have a real home of your own at last. What a pleasant old home this is! Even at this season one can see that. And my friends tell me that Mr. Dalrymple is so kind, and good, and clever, and so much respected in the neighborhood. I am sure you cannot fall to be happy with him, though just at first the farm may seem a little lonely and strange."

The reply to these well-meant remarks was unexpected, for the bride burst into a violent fit of crying, which no soothing on the part of her dismayed guest availed to check.

"I'll tell you about it," she sobbed at last, quieting a little, and won to confidence, as it were, by the tears in Felicia's own eyes. I haven't had any one to tell before, and I'm so unhappy. I didn't think I should feel so when I got married. They all said I should be a fool if I didn't take Mr. Dalrymple, because he was so well off, and he wanted me so much; even Miss Parker she said she couldn't countenance no such a thing as my saying no, and I'd never have such another chance the longest day I lived. Then I never had no one to do for me before, and he gave me such a lot of things, and I did so like to look nice and pretty like ladies do, and so—I did. And then, somehow, when it was all over, and I had to go off with him, it come to me all of a sudden what I'd done, and how my whole life was a going to be just the same thing always, and he was always a going to be there, and I know the girls laughed at us behind our backs, and Louisa Brooks called him 'spindle-toes,' and yet I'd got to stay by him and never go anywhere else, or be anything else. And it all come over me, and it was awful! I hadn't ever realized it before." And she looked with piteous anxiety into Miss Mallows face, who stroked her hand gently, but wisely made no answer as yet.

"I s'pose folks do call this a pleasant place," she went on, after a little pause, "but it don't look pleasant to me. I ain't used to the country, or to being alone all day. There was two hundred of us at the asylum, and at Miss Parker's I was close to the town, and I could see folks a-passing, and hear wagons. It's so still here I can hear myself think almost, and the wind makes noises in the chimney, and I lie awake at night and listen. It's like a voice, and it says, 'Alone! alone! alone! and groans, and frightens me awfully."

"I don't think it says that," exclaimed

Miss Mallows, with a sudden inspiration. "It says, 'a home! a home! a home!' That is what the wind always seems to say to me in homely old chimneys like these." Then she thought to herself, "shall I? or shan't I? I hate preaching, and I hate meddling; but there's a chance to do a bit of good, maybe, and—yes, I'll risk it."

"Now listen to me, dear," she went on, aloud, softening her voice as if to a child. "This is what I think about your position. It seems to me that you are just at the point when you must decide for yourself whether you'll be a happy woman or an unhappy one for the rest of your life."

"How? What do you mean?"

"Why, you were a lonely girl, you know, with no real home of your own, and here a good man has come along and taken you into his. He loves you dearly now, and you have a great deal of influence over him, and can do pretty much as you like now; but how long will that last if you go on crying and being unhappy and showing how little you care for him?"

"I don't know," whispered the bride, faintly.

"Then you are married, you know. You have given a promise, and must keep it, even if it makes you sorry. Promises are solemn things. But I think you can keep it and be happy too. And it strikes me you have a chance to do a most beautiful thing."

"What is that?" wonderingly.

"To make up to a good man who loves you for a hard, hard thing in his life. Think how dreadful it must always have been for your husband, with his clever mind and fine face, to feel himself in one respect inferior to the stupidest laborer who works in his field. It must have hurt him cruelly always, and if he were not a sweet-hearted person by nature, it must have made him hard and sour. Now, for the first time, something delightful has come into his life. He has married you, and it seems to me such a chance as few women have to be able to be so much to any one as you can be to him. And—don't you think I want to preach; but God always blesses those who try to do right, and if you make your husband happy, I think he will bless you and make you happy too."

Her eyes ran over her as she made her little speech.

"Felicia!" sounded from below—"Felicia, we ought to be going."

"Must you go?" cried Mrs. Dalrymple, sitting up in bed, "Thank you ever so much. You have done me a heap of good. I'll never forget you—never. Oh—what's your name?"

"Felicia—Felicia Mallows. Good-bye, dear; and do not forget that the wind in the chimney never says 'alone,' when two people who care for each other are together." Then they said good-bye. "I shall come again if I can before I leave," declared Felicia. Old Sally, coming up to hasten her movements, was astonished to see the two exchange a kiss.

"Why, what ever has she done to the cretur?" she muttered, as the pony wagon rolled away. "She looks twice as alive as she did afore they came."

We drop a tiny seed into the ground, or we watch a winged messenger detach itself from the parent plant and float away on its separate errand, and we are scarcely conscious that with the act a new sequence of energies and possibilities began, and the world is richer for a fresh point of growth. Felicia had no chance for another visit to the Dalrymple farm that autumn, and it was two years before she saw it again, during which the image of the oddly circumstanced little bride faded into dim distance, as images will in this overcrowded world. Another visit to Patuxet revived it into sudden life.

"What ever became of that little neighbor of yours who married a young girl?" she asked Mrs. Lenox. "It was when I was last here. Do you recollect our going there?"

"Yes, now that you recall it, I do; and the unconscionable time you staid up stairs in her bed-room. I believe she is well. Her baby was baptised a few Sundays ago."

"Have they a baby?"

"Yes; a little girl. By-the-way—" Mrs. Lenox was called off, and did not finish her sentence. Next day Miss Mallows borrowed the pony-wagon for a solitary drive.

"I want to see my little friend Mrs. Dalrymple," she explained; "and supposing her to be up stairs, you might get tired of old Sally."

"Thank you, my dear, I should. You are welcome to the pony."

It was a September day, as mild as June; and when Miss Mallows drove through the farm-gate, she saw it mistress sitting in the porch, her sleeping baby in its wagon beside her, and her sewing in her hands. She dropped it with a start of joy when she caught sight of her guest.

"It is you!" she cried. "Oh, I am so glad!"

Is there any flattery equal to that "you?"

"You haven't forgotten me, then?" said Felicia.

"Oh, no; how could I forget? You came when I was all sick and miserable, and lifted me right out of it. There's never been a day since then I haven't thought of you."

"Then you are sick and miserable no longer?" said Miss Mallows, with a second kiss. "That is happy news."

"Oh no; I am quite contented now. David is ever so good to me, and I think more of him every day. And then there's my baby."

"Let me see her. What a sweet little face!"

"Isn't it?" with an exultant smile. "And she's much prettier with her eyes open. They are not blue; they are dark gray, like her father's, and just lovely. And I named her after you, Felicia. David! that's her name. How I wish he was here! I've told him heaps about you. He's over in the field yonder with the hay-cutters. They do twice as well if he sits by and looks after them."

"Dear Mrs. Dalrymple, how glad I am to see you again! And to think of naming your baby after me!"

"Oh, I wanted to. You were so good to me that day. All you said to me came true. I couldn't think more of David than I do now if he was as tall as Goliath. He's little, but he's got the biggest heart—that's right, baby; wake up, and tell the lady that papa is the best man in the world. He is, isn't he? Did you hear her? She said yes."

The Noise of the Finger.

In the current number of the *Medical Record*, Dr. Hammond says that when you poke the end of your finger in your ear the roaring noise you hear is the sound of the circulation in your finger—which is a fact, as any one can demonstrate for himself by first putting his fingers in his ears, and then stopping them up with another substance. Try it and think what a wonderful machine your body is, that even the points of your fingers are such busy workshops that they roar like a small Niagara. The roaring is probably more than the noise of the circulation of the blood. It is the voice of all the vital processes together—the tearing down and building up processes that are always going forward in every living body, from conception to death.

The Baptist Teacher catches at one of Mr. Gough's bright sayings to point a moral for the habitually unpunctual. Gough says that in his travels he has met with a three-handed race—people that have a right hand, a left hand, and a little behind-hand. And yet, three-handed though they be, they are the most unhandy people in the world to have around, especially in Sunday school. "Late—late—so late"—not once, but always. Nobody ever knew them to be in time. Change your hour as much as you may—put it forward, put it backward—no changes of season or place will make any change in their minds or habits; they will always hit it exactly, and make their appearance just fifteen minutes late.

Rough on the Doctor.

A singular case of homicide was recently tried at Spoleti, Italy, the accused being a rich farmer, and his offence the shooting of a doctor who had failed to cure his child. When the child, a boy of fourteen months, fell ill, the farmer sent for the doctor, and told him that if his treatment was successful he would pay him 200 lire (about \$400), but that if the child died he would kill him. The doctor undertook the case, but his medicine seemed to aggravate the disease, and death ensued. A few weeks after the funeral the farmer lay in wait for the unfortunate practitioner and shot him. The court gave the lenient sentence of ten years' imprisonment and 25,000 lire fine.

Mr. Spurgeon, in walking a little way out of London to preach, chanced to get his pantaloons quite muddy. A good deacon met him at the door and desired to get a brush and take off some of the mud. "Oh, no," said Mr. S., "don't you see it is wet, and if you try to brush it now, you will rub the stain into the cloth? Let it dry, when it will come off easy enough and leave no mark." So, when men speak evil of us falsely—throw mud at us—don't be in a hurry about brushing it off. Too great eagerness to rub it off, is apt to rub it in. Let it dry; by and by, if need be, a little effort will remove it.

Wicked Clergymen.

"I believe it to be all wrong and even wicked for clergymen or other public men to be led into giving testimonials to quack doctors or vile stuffs called medicines, but when a really meritorious article made of valuable remedies known to all, that all physicians use and trust in daily, we should freely commend it. I therefore cheerfully and heartily commend Hop Bitters for the good they have done for me and my friends, firmly believing they have no equal for family use. I will not be without them."

Rev. —, Washington, D. C.